



# QUARTERLY REPORT

## ORGANIC FOOD PROGRAM'S CUSTOMER SURVEY 2004: YOU TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING

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### Calendar of Events

#### Western Washington Farm Walks

##### On Monitoring, Identification and Organic Control of Local Pests

July 12, 2004 8am—1pm Full Circle Farm Carnation, WA.

July 26, 2004 8am—1pm Alm Hill Gardens. Everson, WA.

Organic box lunch to follow. Cost is \$20.00 per walk. To register, send name, address, phone and fee to:

Tilth Producers  
PO Box 85056  
Seattle, WA 98145  
(360) 442-7620

#### Field Analysis of Food Systems

August 11 through August 18, 2004  
Pullman, WA

An intensive, experiential course visiting farms, food processing and marketing facilities to develop an understanding of issues and relationships of sustainable food systems.

Contact: Cathy Perillo at cperillo@wsu.edu

#### Cultivating a Sustainable Workplace

##### 2004 Agricultural Health and Safety Conference

September 12–14, 2004

McMenamins Edgefield, Troutdale, Oregon  
Contact (800) 326-7568 or on the internet at <http://depts.washington.edu/pnash/conf04/index.html>

The Organic Food Program conducts a customer survey every three years to gauge how we are doing, learn where we can improve, and find out what is working well for our clients. With the help of the Organic Advisory Board, this year's Customer Survey was a tremendous success.

One hundred fifty certified organic producers, processors, and handlers were randomly selected from all businesses currently certified by the Organic Food Program. Nine of these businesses were assigned to each Organic Advisory Board member to be interviewed from March 19 through April 8, 2004. Of the one hundred twenty-six businesses assigned, we received feedback from seventy-nine.

Selected businesses were asked to rate from 1 (Always or Almost Always) to 4 (Never or Almost Never) the Organic Food Program's efficiency, effectiveness and utility in the following areas: Office Information, Inspections,

International Certification Programs, and General. The interviewee was then offered an opportunity to make additional comments or suggestions related to the program that was not covered by the questionnaire.

The interviewees indicated that the documentation included in the renewal packets was useful and that the correspondence received from the Olympia office was clear (average score of 1.5). Responses indicated that inspections were thorough and that the inspectors were knowledgeable about organic standards and organic food production (average score of 1). Additionally, the interviewees felt that the international programs were useful to Washington State organic food growers (average score of 1) and that we simultaneously did well to meet the needs of small producers (average score of 1).

On the other hand, the interviews indicated that it would be easy to

cheat on inspections and that it was not hard to pass the organic inspection. Additionally, the interviewed applicants seemed hesitant for the Organic Food Program to shift completely to electronic inspecting and reporting. This feedback is vital as we make plans and set goals for our future.

The Customer Survey is not the only time that the Organic Food Program is open to perspectives from our clients.

Suggestions, thoughts, and feedback are always welcome. You can email your thoughts to our program web-site at [organic@agr.wa.gov](mailto:organic@agr.wa.gov) or call any of the Organic Food Program staff to express your ideas. If you are interested in a complete copy of the Organic Food Program Survey 2004, please contact Rachael Jamison at (360) 902-1951 or email [rjamison@agr.wa.gov](mailto:rjamison@agr.wa.gov).

By Rachael Jamison, Organic Program Specialist

## UPDATES TO THE ORGANIC FOOD PROGRAM WEBSITE

If you have access to the Internet, take a moment to visit the Organic Food Program's website. You will find a variety of helpful information, including updates to the Brand Name Material List, job opportunities and current issues of the Quarterly Report. We also post other information from the organic industry that you may find helpful. Our address is: <http://agr.wa.gov/foodanimal/organic/default>.



## Inspector's Corner

### **Do I need to inform the Organic Food Program before I remove a field or site from organic production?**

Yes. Section 205.400 of the National Organic Standards explains this need as part of the general requirements for organic certification. According to 205.400 (f)(2), a person seeking to receive or maintain organic certification must immediately notify their certifying agency concerning any change in a certified operation or portion of a certified operation. The removal of a field or site from organic production is considered a significant change in the operation and a change in the information contained on an operation's organic certificate. Failure to notify the Organic Food Program *prior* to such a change in farm management could result in compliance actions against your operation or the suspension of your certification.

### **I am a certified organic farmer. Why didn't I receive an Organic Food Producer Certificate this spring? Usually, it comes after I submit my renewal application.**

Prior to 2004 WSDA issued updated certificates to all certified operations after the operation submitted annual renewal paperwork in March. However, according to the National Organic Standards, (Section 205.404(c)) **certificates do not expire** unless the operator withdraws from organic certification, or their certificate is suspended or revoked by the certification agency. Please note that the WSDA certificates issued prior to July, 2003 contain an anniversary date on them that cause the certificate to appear as though it has expired. Upon completion of the 2004 on-site inspection, all certified operations will be issued updated certificates with this anniversary date removed.

## THE LOCAL FOOD CORNER

Welcome to the first installment of "The Local Food Corner." Written by WSDA Small Farm and Direct Marketing Program, this column will appear in each Quarterly Report and will feature information about Washington's Local Food Systems. Each issue we will illustrate how Washington farms are making the connection with their local communities. As the global food system continues to drive Washington farms out of business or toward ever greater growth, there is a need for us to explore ideas about bringing the harvest home. This issue will focus on a quick introduction to the **Small Farm and Direct Marketing Program**.

The Small Farm and Direct Marketing Program (SFDM) was established at WSDA in 2001 to serve the needs of farmers seeking alternative production and marketing strategies. Our main objectives are to:

- provide information and examination of regulations and licensing for selling farm products;
- assist with the development of processing infrastructure; and
- enhance local food systems to increase

the economic viability of family farms in Washington.

Farmers wishing to learn more about the regu-

Washington State. This guide is also available on our website.

People often ask us, what our definition of a "small farm" is? Offi-

cially, we use the USDA definition: Those farms which gross under \$250,000 annually, and whose day-to-day operations are managed by a farm family which own or lease the productive assets of the farm. This includes approximately



**Students enjoy fresh produce.** The cafeteria at Evergreen State College features locally grown greens, tomatoes, cucumbers and more produce harvested from small farms in Washington. Photo by Leslie Zenz

latory landscape governing direct marketing can find great information in our publication, *The Handbook of Rules and Regulations on Direct Farm Marketing* a.k.a. "The Green Book", available on our website at <http://agr.wa.gov/marketing/smallfarm>. This handbook is currently being updated and a new edition will be out in November this year.

The SFDM helps to facilitate direct marketing opportunities such as farmer-chef connections and Farm-to-Cafeteria connections. Farmers, food service directors, and community organizers interested in connecting local farms with schools and other institutions can find out more in our publication *Farm-to-Cafeteria Connections: Marketing Opportunities for Small Farms in*

87% of all farms in Washington.

We understand the term "small farm" as more of a concept, than a definition. As a concept, it embodies the principles of sustainability (environmental stewardship, economic viability, and social responsibility); it embodies innovation and alternatives in agricultural production; and it applies a holistic analysis in seeking solutions.

For more information about the Small Farm and Direct Marketing Program or to comment on this column, please contact Leslie Zenz at (360) 902-1884, or Kelli Sanger at (360) 902-2057.

By Leslie Zenz, Small Farm and Direct Marketing Program Manager Contact at (360) 902-1884 or email [lzenze@agr.wa.gov](mailto:lzenze@agr.wa.gov).

## THE BRITISH SOIL ASSOCIATION ACCEPTS THE EUROPEAN VERIFICATION PROGRAM

The Soil Association is the United Kingdom's leading certification organization for organic food and farming. The Soil Association's organic symbol is the UK's most recognizable trademark for organic produce. The British Soil Association has accepted the equivalent to the Soil Association Standards. WSDA European Organic Verification Program as Rachael Jamison, Brenda Book and Miles McEvoy have been working on establishing a product acceptance agreement with the Soil Association since 2002. This agreement reduces the barriers to exporting organic products to the United Kingdom and facilitates the continual growth in organic ex-



ports to Europe.

## EXPANDING MARKET—U.S. EXPORT TO KOREA

Organic exports of WSDA certified organic food products to Korea have increased over the last few months. In July, 2003, the labeling requirements for processed organic products exported to Korea were updated to more closely parallel organic labeling requirements in the U.S. In order for the products to clear Korean customs, the Korean Food and Drug Administration is also requiring organic export documentation to accompany all organic processed products shipped to Korea.

As a result of these new requirements, the market for US organic products exported to Korea has increased and WSDA Organic Food Program has been receiving requests from numerous companies for transaction or export certificates. From September 2003 through April 2004, WSDA Organic Food Program has issued Korean export certificates for a variety of products, including organic frozen vegetables, organic juice concentrates, and organic roasted coffee. Based on inquiries and conversations with operators, our program anticipates this organic market to continue to grow throughout the next year. *By Brenda Book Organic Food Program Specialist. (360) 902-2090*

## ELECTRONIC INSPECTION REPORTS FOR 2004

During the 2003 inspection year, the WSDA Organic Food Program initiated a pilot project to test the concept that on-site inspections could be conducted using electronic inspection reports. The project was successful in demonstrating that this concept could work. As a result, the Organic Food Program has elected to do all of the 2004 on-site inspections electronically. Each organic inspector has been issued a laptop to use in the field. Inspection reports are completed as they have been in the past, but instead of being hand written, they are recorded electronically. The reports are emailed to the Olympia office where they are reviewed in the same way as they were in the past. After the report has been reviewed, copies of the report along with the reviewer's letter will be sent to you.

### **Advantages of the electronic reports:**

- Typed reports are easier to read than hand written reports.
- Electronic reports save the cost of mailing the reports from the field to Olympia.
- Reports arrive in the office more quickly and can, thus, be responded to more quickly.
- It is easier to include longer narratives in the reports.
- The inspectors will have copies of the reports to answer questions that arise out of the review process
- It is the first step toward a web based data collection and information distribution system that is under development in the Food Safety, Animal Health and Consumer Services division.
- Space will eventually be saved in the Olympia office.

### **Disadvantages to the electronic reports:**

- Touch typing is a mandatory skill for inspectors.
- Shelter may be needed for unfavorable weather conditions during inspections—this may be difficult at some sites.
- Laptops need to be maintained so that they operate properly at all times, such as anti-virus, operating system updates and hard drive backups on a regular basis.
- The inspection process may seem more impersonal if the applicant is always on the other side of the screen from the inspector.
- Maps drawn at the inspection, or other documents collected at the inspection need to be scanned into a document that can be sent electronically or sent separately as a hard copy attachments.

As you receive your 2004 inspection, please pay attention to the electronic aspect of the process. We look forward to any feedback that you may have. Please contact Les Eklund at (360) 902-1891 with questions or comments. *By Les Eklund, Organic Program Supervisor (360) 902-1891*

## Mission Statement

The WSDA Organic Food Program protects consumers and supports the organic food industry by ensuring the integrity of organic food products. The program certifies organic producers and handlers to US National Organic Standards and enforces organic standards in Washington State. The program supports the development of export markets by providing certification to foreign organic standards.



## IFOAM ACCREDITATION UPDATE

WSDA applied for accreditation from the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) in June 2003. From March 29 – April 6, 2004, Jan Deane conducted a site audit of the WSDA Organic Food Program as part of the IFOAM accreditation process. The site audit consisted of three office days and three field days reviewed policies and procedures and accompanying inspectors in the field. The major findings of the audit are:

- Inspection reports do not include enough information. Need to include more narrative comments to explain all aspects of



the operation. Each section of the report should have some comments. For example a brief description of the soil program must be included (e.g. grower relies on composted dairy manure for soil fertility. Grower uses approved boron and zinc micronutrients based on soil fertility testing).

- No production audits included in inspection process. Audits need to include a reconciliation of production with acres in organic production as well as a re-

view of the audit trail that traces organic product from the field to the handler or processor.

- Need stakeholder review of European Organic Program.

The Organic Food Program has until July 28, 2004 to respond to the findings of the evaluation visit. *Miles McEvoy, Organic Program Manager*